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ABSTRACT

Ticonderoga High School (New York) has succeeded in increasing enrollments in foreign language courses beyond the college bound, Regents-level students who usually choose such courses. The school is located in the Adirondack Mountains, a region that, in the past decade, has seen increases both in prison construction and in tourism by French-Canadians from Quebec. As a result of these local phenomena, employment opportunities in tourism and corrections have been rapidly increasing. Employers in corrections indicate that Spanish is required for many entry-level jobs and for promotions. Similarly, tourist industry contacts suggest a need for more French-speaking bilingual employees. The high school responded by offering a new five-course sequence in criminal justice, of which two courses must be in Spanish, and is currently developing a five-course sequence in travel and tourism, including two courses in French. Although this experiment is only 1 year old, the percentage of the freshman class enrolled in a foreign language course has increased from 68 percent to 90 percent. Educational benefits are listed to justify the costs incurred by the new program. (SV)

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LINKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION IN A RURAL HIGH SCHOOL:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE WITH CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND TRAVEL & TOURISM

by:

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Linking Foreign Language to Occupational Education:
A Unique New Sequence at Ticonderoga High School

"Why do I have to take a foreign language - I will never use it?" This is no doubt a familiar cry from many high school language students. At Ticonderoga High School, located in the Adirondacks of New York State, this concern is no different than elsewhere. At Ticonderoga, an excellent foreign language teaching staff had been increasing their enrollments annually. However, a certain segment of the school population tended to avoid French or Spanish (the two languages offered at Ticonderoga). Typically, the college bound, Regents level students were the main population taking Foreign Language courses.

Our students' career choices and our geographic location have traditionally shown that occupations in law enforcement and travel/tourism were two of the most popular career areas for our high school students. Often students interested in these fields were directed away from the Regents Diploma track.

One important reason for our new direction was to lure the non-regents, occupational education student into foreign language - using regional employability as an incentive.

The Foreign Language - Occ. Ed. Link

Often times schools do not recognize the occupation education needs of their own region. Here in the Adirondacks we have seen two interesting trends in the 1980's - 1990's.

First, due to economic stress the Adirondack region made itself readily receptive to state and federal prison building and expansion. It was felt by many in our region that prisons offered employment opportunities to our area that traditionally leads the state in unemployment figures. A prison building boom occurred during the past decade.

During the same time the economic climate in Quebec led many French-Canadians to discover that their money actually went further south of the border. French-Canadian tourism in our town, the Champlain Valley and the Lake George region has been booming for the past 10 years.

As a result of these local phenomena, employment opportunities in tourism and corrections has been rapidly increasing, yet we did not really respond to these occupational trends - until now. Both areas are very popular with students, particularly students not in regents tracks.

Employers in corrections now tell us Spanish is required for many entry level jobs and for promotions. Similar reports from tourist industry contacts suggest they need more bilingual French employees.

This is not to imply that these are the only professions that require Spanish and French, but in our region they are both skills that strongly enhance employability. Other regions may find other occupational links to foreign language which are more relevant.

THE NEW SEQUENCE

We felt that criminal justice was such a popular field that if we offered a sequence in it, students would rush to sign up. The development of the new 5 unit sequence was done with currently existing courses and a new 1 unit course in criminal justice. The interesting new twist was that two of the five units must be in Spanish. In discussions with the State Education Department, they reported that this was a new concept. However, they liked the idea and approved our request for a new state approved 5 unit Trade Sequence in criminal justice.

The sequence requirements are as follows:

5 UNIT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SEQUENCE

-------- Required: 4 Units from the following --------

1 Unit - Criminal Justice
2 Units - Spanish
1/2 Unit - Intro to Occupations
1/2 Unit - Keyboarding or BCA

-------- Plus 1 Unit from the Following Choices --------

1/2 Unit - Sociology and/or Anthropology
1 Unit - Spanish III
1 Unit - Business Law
3 Units - Criminal Justice Co-op

All of the courses above already existed in our school except the Criminal Justice Course. S.E.D. provided us with the curriculum for this course, and a local police officer is currently teaching it one period a day.

With school board approval, we hope to adopt a similar format in Travel and Tourism requiring two units of French. In the Adirondacks, our summer job market caters to thousands of French Canadian tourists. Local hotels, restaurants and tourist businesses are increasingly seeking young employees with French language skills. We are hoping to develop a proposal for a 5 unit sequence in Travel & Tourism with similar requirements: 2 required units of French, 1 unit of Travel & Tourism, 1 unit of Introduction to Occupations and 1 unit from existing school offerings that may relate to the field such as "marketing". It is our understanding that our new Occ Ed/Foreign Language sequence is the only such sequence in a New York State high school.

COSTS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

As with every new program, costs become an issue. Since most of the required coursework was being offered already at our school, we needed to add little. For our program we only needed to add one section of "Introduction to Criminal Justice". This involved hiring a teacher for one period a day.

Increased enrollment in foreign language courses has currently been absorbed by existing sections; however if our expansion in this area continues, this may be a future cost as well. Every school's situation is different, but we all have to justify increases, no matter how small. Some justifications for this program are listed.

- Careers in our region demand foreign language skills
- Society is demanding schools to react to a global economy
- The "General track" diploma students are increasingly unemployable
- Businesses are demanding more specialized skills
- Foreign language and culture are academic areas all students should experience - not just college bound students
- Greater motivation and relevance for foreign language students
- Sequence areas (Criminal Justice and Tourism) were based on student interest, not a school/state mandate
- The Foreign language staff is pleased with the new importance of their discipline, traditionally considered a "frill"
- Program is offered and controlled "in-house"
- Program serves as an excellent "feeder" for our Co-op program and collegiate programs in Criminal Justice/Tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

As predicted, our new criminal justice course filled up immediately. The class is made up of many students who would not have thought of taking Spanish, but now see it as something important for their career.

Although our experiment is only one year old, our enrollment numbers for freshmen in foreign language are quite impressive. In 1992-93, before the program was initiated, 68% of our freshmen class enrolled in French I or Spanish I. This year 90% of the freshmen class are taking French I or Spanish I!

In our increasingly global economy, the link between foreign language study and the growing needs of business make such connections logical.